



U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

U.S. SENATOR RICHARD C. SHELBY, AL, RANKING MEMBER

EMBARGOED UNTIL BEGINNING OF HEARING

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OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR RICHARD C. SHELBY

Two Years After the Storm: Housing Needs in the Gulf Coast

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“Thank you, Mr. Chairman.”

“It has been over two years since Hurricane Katrina made landfall leaving behind a trail of unimaginable destruction and loss. Before we begin a discussion of the continuing needs of Katrina survivors, however, I would like to once again remember the nearly 2,000 individuals who lost their lives. I believe that we can honor their memory, in part, by insuring that the Gulf area is rebuilt not as it was, but as it should be.”

“In these last two years, Congress has appropriated over \$100 billion to rebuild what Katrina destroyed. This is a significant sum of money. Clearly the question is not a matter of funding, but rather a question of why is it taking so long to get the funding to those who need it. I hope today’s hearing will provide an opportunity to examine how well the post-Katrina rebuilding effort is being conducted.”

“While much of the focus since Katrina has been on New Orleans, it is also important to remember that Katrina also caused significant damage in Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. A great deal of the damage done in these states occurred in many rural areas and small towns. I am particularly concerned that some of these smaller areas lack the capacity to fully tap the funding Congress has provided for their needs. For instance, over a third of the homes damaged in Mobile County, Alabama were located in the unincorporated, often rural, areas of that county.”

“Congress tasked HUD with overseeing the development and implementation of each state’s plan to address housing needs resulting from Katrina. I look forward to hearing how HUD is monitoring each states’ efforts to address the specific, and at times, unmet needs of these smaller, and sometimes isolated communities.”

“I want to welcome all of today’s witnesses and thank them for their appearance at this hearing. While leadership here in Washington is vital to the success of the Gulf

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Region, the most important leadership has been that at the local level. I want to thank and recognize those Alabamians who are in the audience today for their continuing efforts in helping bring back Southern Alabama.”

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman.”